(61) The Nature of Deep Sleep

Among the many visitors who have come to Shri Maharaj, there are some who, perhaps because of a common line of guidance several years ago, found themselves bogged down at a particular point of comprehension and wanted a clarification from Shri Maharaj. The specific problem centred on the nature of the state of deep sleep.

They had misunderstood — or perhaps, more likely, they had misunderstood what they had been told — that the state of deep sleep was indeed the "ultimate" state or our true original state. And they were quite upset to be told by Shri Maharaj that nothing could be further from the truth. How can the state of deep sleep, Shri Maharaj asked them, which alternates with the waking state in consciousness be our true state? Consciousness itself is a time-bound state which depends upon a food-body for its manifestation and sustenance. The state of deep sleep is therefore very much a physical condition with a certain duration alternating with the waking state. The reason why it is mistaken for the 'non-objective awareness', i.e. where awareness is not aware of itself, is that during sleep consciousness makes itself disappear into a seed. But the important point is that this state of deep sleep is similar to "awareness" only to the extent that consciousness then is not conscious of itself, but this state is already in movement insofar as time is a duration after which the waking state will take over again.

In the state of deep sleep, all that one can say is that the sense of presence which is present during the waking state is absent in the deep sleep state. The state of awareness — what we truly are — on the other hand, is the total absence of both the presence and the absence of the sense of presence. This is the all-important distinction.

It is a measure of the strength of conceptual conditioning that people who were supposed to have reached a high spiritual level (whatever it might mean!) could not easily appreciate this basic distinction which Shri Maharaj made between deep sleep and pure awareness. It was almost a pitiable sight to see Shri Maharaj demolishing their concepts with vehemence - concepts which they had held so long ~~with such~~, so lovingly, and which they were obviously so reluctant to let go. Shri Maharaj, ~~likened them~~ with his inexpressible sense of humour, likened their state of mind with a millionaire who has suddenly been informed that all his millions have suddenly turned out to be totally worthless!

Shri Maharaj made it clear that the waking state and the deep sleep state are the part of the consciousness in manifestation. If this is clearly understood, he said, there would be no confusion. A hundred years ago, ~~about~~ Shri Maharaj asked the leading members of this group, were you concerned with deep sleep? Did you need deep sleep? Now, when consciousness has manifested itself in a physical apparatus, could you carry on without deep ~~sleep~~ sleep for any length of time? Consciousness - deep sleep - waking state - duration in time is all one concept associated with manifestation. How could it possibly be equated with awareness which is intemporality, pure subjectivity without the slightest touch of objectivity?